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BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, APRIL 10, 1905

No 122

Fifteenth Meeting of the Latin Club

The fifteenth regular meeting of the New York Latin Club is called for Saturday May 13, at 12 M, in the Hotel St Denis, corner of Broadway and Eleventh Street, New York. Prof Tracy Peck of Yale, will address the Club. All persons who are interested, whether teachers of Latin or not, are cordially invited to be present. The plan is to serve luncheon at 12 M, promptly, so that there shall be no delay. The address will follow the luncheon, and adjournment will occur about 2 P M, *thus leaving the afternoon still unbroken, for those who attend.* Please send a postal card at once to the Sec'y, Mr A L Hodges, 309 W 101 st, N Y, if you intend to be present, so that we may notify Mr Taylor, the proprietor of the hotel, how many to expect. *Please attend to this at once.*

The subject of the address will be announced later.

The price of the luncheon will be 75 cents to members, \$1.00 to others.

Information as to the membership in The Latin Club can be had at this meeting, or by referring to Nos. 3 and 10 of THE LATIN LEAFLET, or by addressing the Secretary

H H BICE, *President*
A L HODGES, *Secretary*

Is a New Renaissance (in Classics) Possible?

In Three Parts—Part II

Please observe that this success in imitating and reproducing the Latin classics, this essentially exotic faculty in Petrarch raised him so high in his time that neither Goethe, Scott, Byron, nor Darwin, in the last century, singly, enjoyed so uniform, so all pervasive and all permeating a renown as Petrarch did: when even his urging upon the Papal court to migrate back from Avignon to the eternal city of the Seven Hills was attentively and practically considered — when Cola di Rienzi was powerfully quickened in his absurd and impossible project to resuscitate the ancient Republic of Rome: it was the new spirit of the Renaissance at work. Neither history indeed nor culture in itself we believe can be reprimed

nated by enthusiasm of idealization no matter how genuine or profound. Of Greek indeed Petrarch learned but the faintest elements, and still when at last he possessed at least a copy of a Ms of Homer in the original Greek, sent to Petrarch by an admirer at the court of Constantinople, he (to use the words of Voigt) gazed upon the copy with ecstasis, he embraced it, though he merely knew how highly the Romans, men like Cicero, Horace, Pliny, had esteemed these poems. For two centuries, we may say roughly from the early manhood of Petrarch 1336 to the death of Erasmus 1536 — for two centuries the classicism of the Humanists dominated the entire intellectual movement in Europe in a manner and so thoroughly as no single creed, system, philosophy or science has since that time.

Greek indeed, which to Latin is as gold is to silver, and as the sun from which the moon of Roman civilization borrowed most of its light — Greek, I say, cannot be said, in and through the Renaissance movement to have attained the sovereign position which was its due. Some knowledge of Greek and some Greek MSS were derived from Constantinople. Filelfo, who long made Milan a center of classicism, had but few peers in that familiarity with Greek which had been absolutely commonplace with the Romans of Cicero's or of Pliny's time. The phonetic beauty of Hellenic speech presented itself, it is true, in the effeminate piping of Byzantine pronunciation: the long school tradition of conservatory practice, was utterly void of enthusiasm and singularly unfitted to breed any... In 1476 the Byzantine grammar of Lascaris was printed at Florence, and Byzantinism with its formularies of wooden and mechanical procedure dominated Greek instruction down to the time of our grandsires, when Buttmann began a better order of things. The great aim of the Renaissance enthusiasts in the century from 1400 to 1500 was to translate the Greek classics into Latin as if thus only they were sure to truly possess them. The leaders, many of whom were primarily manuscript collectors, fostered in every way this movement of latinizing the Greek classics.

Thus in the earlier part of the *quattro cento*,

di Rossi, a Florentine nobleman, began to translate Aristotle, another Florentine noble, Palla di Strozzi, in his Paduan Exile, translated works of Plutarch, Plato, and Chrysostom into Latin; another Florentine, Bruni, prepared versions into Latin of rare purity and elegance of Aristotle, Demosthenes and Plutarch, and rose to the high post of Chancellor of the republic, died 1443. The Camaldulensian monk, Traversari, accepted from Cosimo de Medici the task of translating the biographies of Greek philosophers of Diogenes Laertius from the Greek.

In 1447 the former librarian Parentucelli of Florence became pope as Nicholas V. His greatest desire was to gather sound translations from the Greek classics into the Vatican library, and his greatest pleasure, to reward the translator with heavy purses of gold sequins. Valla translated Thucydides, and received a purse of 500 scudi; the same pope rewarded Perotti for his translation of Polybius, and advanced him to the archbishopric of Siponto. Trapezuntios, the Cretan, translated for Nicholas Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* and was rewarded with gold and an apostolic Secretaryship. Another Greek, Theodoros Gaza of Thessalonica, prepared for the same papal patron versions of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Aelianus.

The deepest impression, far beyond this patronage of the collector's mania, however, was made at Florence, in the time of the third Medici, *Lorenzo il Magnifico* himself, and the translation of Plato by Marsilius Ficinus is still in our hands. In the latter part of the century *Poliziano* of Florence stands forth as a far famed exemplar of the culture and faculties of the Renaissance of letters. He was the Greek teacher whose German and English pupils brought from Florence to their native land the inception of Greek studies there. His published works exhibit that elegant Latinity which permits us to infer how absolutely and unreservedly the foremost minds of the Medicean era were imbued with the classics, when some, as Bembo of the succeeding generation, even strove to elevate one single author into the canonic position of the only model. Though Poliziano himself, refusing to admit Ciceronian epistolography as normative, says that otherwise he will be happy to attain even to Cicero's shadow.

But even for his writing he cites the manner of Pliny, of Symmachus, of Plato and of Aristotle, Dio, Brutus, Apollonius, Philostratus, Alciphron, Libanius, Lucian: clearly with a

heavy preponderance toward the Greek side. For other features of his production, e. g. his themes, he proposes to rely upon Seneca; or an anecdote of Theophrastus, or rhetorical rules of Aquila, of Quintilian... and even this multiplicity of literary dependence, absolutely excluding and abhorring any genuine originality, was clearly considered the very flower of a literary faculty which was essentially learned and essentially imitative — things so far removed from genuine literary dignity of the first order as they well can be. In these letters to friends classical problems are discussed — a botanical problem from the elder Pliny, with references to Theophrastus and Dioscorides; or he writes a personal letter to the tutor of the crownprince of the kingdom of the two Sicilies at Naples, or to the Platonic enthusiast Pico della Mirandola. A letter to a young lady of Venice gives him the opportunity with somewhat cumulative flattery to garner from wide fields of classic reading allusions to Diotima and Aspasia; to the Greek poetesses Telesilla, Corinna, Sappho, Anyte, Erinna, Praxilla and Cleobulina and, of course, to Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi. And even the Almighty must be adorned with an epithet of the Roman Jove: (Deus) Optimus Maximus: (though this seems also to be an unbroken tradition of the nomenclature in use by the Roman Catholic Church).

But let us pass to the greatest and the most eminent of the Humanists of the Renaissance, to Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Reared in the cloisters the keenly critical youth was filled at an early age with an ineradicable aversion for the ecclesiastic order of things amid which he had his being, trimming his sails and gaining pensions continually; — passionate, even while residing among his fellow monastics, to emancipate himself from the ecclesiastic culture and to acquire the practical power over pure and elegant Latinity which was still considered the highest attainment of man.

At Paris amid severe privations Erasmus learned the rudiments of Greek from a sojourning Byzantine, visiting England repeatedly and being deeply cherished by Thomas More, Colet, Wolsey and even the later king Henry VIII himself, writing his satirical *Adagia* in Lucian's vein, with whom he was in actual and conscious affinity, he on the whole never gained a mastery of Greek comparable to his Latin: he said as he matured: "I am determined to master this Greek", and: "I am writing books which will live forever"; "I

have set my heart, I tell you, on compassing the whole round of literature". Of his Latinity Prince Henry (afterwards Henry VIII) said: "A style which all the world praises". It was More who prompted him to write that book which will probably outlive all the other products of his infinitely industrious pen, his social satire, the *Encomium Moriae*, published in Paris 1509 and penned in a week or two, and while this is not at all a professedly classical production but as essentially modern of its day as a page in Punch would be to-day, still almost all if not all its grace and force of allusion was borrowed from the Classics, and the proportion of Classical citation and allusion may well be brought to the notice of the modern reader: I have culled from but a few chapters of the famous Satire allusions to the following classical matters or names: Midas, Pan, Hercules, Solon, Saturn, Jupiter, Plutus, Homer, Hesiod, Pallas, Plutus in Aristophanes, Delos, Garden of Adonis, Jove's goat-nurse, Bacchus, Venus, Lucretius, the Stoics, Sophocles, Plautus, Nestor, Achilles, Medea, Circe, Memnon's daughter, Phaon, Sappho, Pallas, Cupid, Flora, Diana, Endymion, Momus, Priapus, Mercury, Vulcan, Silenus, Stoics, Plato, Demosthenes, Socrates — with allusion to Aristophanes' Clouds, Theophrastus, Cicero, Quintilian, the two Catos, Brutus, Cassius, The Gracchi, M Aurelius, Commodus, Cicero's son, Socrates' children, Timon, Amphion, Orpheus, Menenius, Agrippa, Themistocles, Sertorius, Lycurgus, Minos, Numa — Egeria, the Decii, Curtius, Democritus, Heli-conian maidens, Plato's Atlantis, the complete wise man of the Stoics, the suicide of Diogenes, Xenocrates, Cato, Cassius, Brutus, Chiron, etc, etc.

E G SIHLER,
New York University

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